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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests a cocurricular forensic program for departments of speech in junior colleges. Because the junior college has a commuting student body, many of the students hold part- or full-time jobs apart from class work, and nearly one student in four is married, the forensic program must show the student postcollege vocational applicability while being an immediately stimulating but not constantly demanding responsibility. It must also be an educationally sound, need-satisfying program which provides for a wide range of student abilities and motivations. Debate/forensics is valuable for the community college student because it provides training in how to think quickly as well as critically, in how to express ideas clearly so that they may be understood and evaluated by others, and in organizing and integrating many arguments coherently. It also develops tolerance for different points of view. Community college forensic programs must have balance in the following areas in order to satisfy the needs of the students, the objectives of the college, and the demands of the community: competitive intercollegiate activities, competitive and nondecision intramural events, and community service in the form of a speakers' bureau. (SW)

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BALANCE IN

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE FORENSIC PROGRAM

by

Dr. Dan Pyle Millar

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TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

In 1941 the Speech Education Committee, jointly appointed the year before from membership of the National Association of Teachers of Speech and the American Association of Junior Colleges, presented its report.[1]

Quoting from the section dealing with the philosophy of speech education in the junior college, we find: "A philosophy of speech education for the junior college necessarily must be based on the essential dualism in the general philosophy of the junior college itself. Speech education must be recognized as a communicatory tool in all areas in which the junior college student may find himself after leaving the junior college. Speech education must be so planned as to serve the needs of both the preuniversity and the terminal student."[2]

Further on, the report recommends the inclusion of extra-class activities and a contest program as educationally sound.[3] Despite this encouragement, one measurement of the extensiveness of speech activity programs among the junior college membership in the national honorary, indicates less than ten per cent of all junior colleges have chapters in that organization.[4]

With ever-increasing enrollments in institutions of higher learning, an increasing educational burden will fall upon the junior colleges. Therefore, greater burdens will fall upon the various curricula to

provide educationally sound and stimulating education, Since forensics activities extend the speech classroom to competitive situations and to the community, this may mean a greater demand for co-curricular activities such as debate/forensics in the departments of speech. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a co-curricular forensic program for departments of speech in junior colleges.

I

The community college subjected itself to an immense educational challenge when it accepted this admission policy: "Any high school graduate, or any person over eighteen years of age who seems capable of profiting by the instruction offered, is eligible for admission."[5] An integral part of the community college philosophy, then, is an open-door policy. Many states have gone beyond this position by stating their intent to provide community college education within commuting distance of every student in the state.[6]

With the explicit intent of educating all students who may benefit from instruction, the community college performs five functions. They include the provision for . . .

1. transfer education of the quality and quantity of that offered by the four-year college and university in the freshman and sophomore years.
2. occupational education of a semi-professional and technical nature for the student interested in immediately entering the labor force upon completion of his junior college experience.
3. general education for the benefit of all ages and kinds of students so that they might function as satisfied, productive, responsible citizens in a democratic society.
4. service to the community including adult education, special programs, staff leadership and facility

availability which will enhance the enrichment of community life.

5. guidance services to students and community members assisting them in educational, vocational and personal choice.[7]

These functions and the objective from which they arise provide the framework within which the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities must operate.

The philosophy of the junior college has generated characteristics which seem to be inherent within the junior college. First, the junior college has a commuting student body.[8] Not living in dormitories or other on-campus housing creates two major problems for the director of a co-curricular activity: (1) finding school time for practice, and (2) communicating with the students while they are on the campus.

Secondly, many of the students hold part- or full-time jobs apart from class work.[9] Those commitments to responsibilities reduce potential available time the student may spend on extra-curricular or co-curricular activities.

A third characteristic of the community college is that nearly one student in four is married.[10] This characteristic, with the others, tends to accentuate "vocationalism" on the community college campus. The student views college as primarily a pre-job experience with little attachment to the college and with little social contact with other students. Thus, the "student role is narrowed to course work and squeezed in among other roles that are oriented off campus."[11]

Consequently, a community college forensic program must show the student post-college vocational applicability while being immediately stimulating without being a constantly demanding responsibility.

A fourth characteristic of the junior college is the diversity of student ability.[12] A typical group of community college day students may contain: a bright 18-year-old freshman boy who has the ability

and motivation to become a lawyer; an 18-year-old girl who, not seeking further college training, looks for a husband with the intermediate goal of a secretarial career for which to train; a flunk-out from a neighboring university who presently is trying to reestablish himself academically so that he can return to that institution; a low-ability high school graduate who, as yet, sees no need for education and has only an anti-military service attitude as motivation; a middle-aged man who has never graduated from high school but now realizes the need for further education if he hopes to establish job security and advancement; a highly motivated middle-aged woman of average ability whose children have grown and who now wants to become an elementary school teacher but cannot attend classes full-time; a highly skilled chemical engineer whose company has allowed him release time in the morning so he may update his knowledge and thereby become more valuable to the company.

An instructor facing an evening division class would probably find the same range of abilities and motivating factors. The chief difference between the day and evening divisions is the greater number of adults.

Another characteristic is one which this author calls "restlessness." There seems to be a feeling of false hope in the junior college. Two of every three junior college students assert intention to transfer, yet only one in three ever does graduate and continue his education.[13] This feeling of restlessness tends to be accentuated by the perception of the junior college as a "last chance institution."[14] That is, the student often perceives his attendance at junior college as a necessity rather than a choice.

One other characteristic of the student body is an apathetic attitude of the community and students toward a program of speech and drama.[15] Consequently, the problems already mentioned become underscored by this general feeling of apathy. The Director of Forensics, then, has the problem of generating interest in

a forensic program; maintaining that interest within a student body which undergoes virtually one full turnover every two years; making the activities available as well as attractive; encouraging the community to appreciate and inspire program participation by its students.

It is within this framework that a forensic program, and its director, must function, and not only simply function but also provide an educationally sound, need-satisfying program to a wide range of student abilities and motivations.

II

Within such a framework, can a forensic program be developed which would provide an educationally sound experience commensurate with the abilities of the students? Yes. If debate/forensics has merit for the student, then these activities have a place in the community college. There have been many lists of the values of debate/forensics, but the following one provides a suggestion of reasons why debate/forensics has value for the community college student:

1. Provides training in how to think quickly as well as critically.
2. Provides training in how to express ideas clearly so that they may be understood and evaluated by others.
3. Provides training in organizing and integrating many arguments into a coherent whole.
4. Develops tolerance for different points of view and is this a valuable means for seeking the truth.[16]

Although referring specifically to the gifted student, Bradley suggests other values of debate (forensics): improves research techniques by promoting "an independent pursuit of the problem on the part of each student" and emotional control is a stressful situation.[17]

Kruger identifies four other advantages which seem to have relevance to the student body of the community college: training in speaking effectively before a group; motivation of the student to learn more about current social, political and economical problems; cultivation of a sense of fair play within the competitive situation, and provision of the opportunity to travel and meet new people.[18]

We may assert that the value of co-curricular speech activities lies in the fact that such activity prepares the student for the situations which he will face after completion of his formal education.

All of these values, and others which could be suggested, certainly corroborate the stated purpose of speech education in the community college: "The general objective of speech is to aid the student in acquiring and developing the ability to communicate effectively in a democratic society, to develop speech as a tool which will enable the individual to present more effectively his ideas in whatever life situations he may appear."[19]

If we accept the assertion that debate/forensics has value for the student (knowing that some are more capable of taking advantage of the exposure than others), we then need to examine the means for providing a forensic program which is educationally sound, student satisfying, challenging (and thus diversified) to the students of a community college.

III

The forensic program of the community college must have balance in order to satisfy the needs of the students, the objectives of the college and the demands of the community. The balance should be between three areas of emphasis within a complete forensic program which provides: competitive inter-collegiate activities, competitive and non-decision intramural events and community service in the form of a speakers'

bureau.[20]

Competition in intercollegiate events appears to have been a consistent part of community college forensics, despite the low membership in Phi Rho Pi. In 1929 all seven of the then-existing junior colleges in Michigan formed the Michigan Junior College Debate League and debated a dual-meet schedule.[21] Today, in California, the majority of the larger junior colleges (those with 1000 students or more) have forensic programs.[22]

The competitive program should include decision events with other community colleges and with students of similar ability from "senior" colleges and universities. The events which might be included in such a program would be debate, extemporaneous speaking, original oratory[23] (or persuasive speaking), oral interpretation and discussion. Although some institutions may participate in one-act play contests,[24] this seems dependent upon the interest and time of the faculty, the students and the community, together with the availability of equipment, facilities and money.

As in any effective forensic program, travel would be a part of the competitive portion because of the motivating stimulus of "providing students with the opportunity to compete with those in other colleges."[25]

Given the problems dealt with earlier, such a program may well exclude some outstanding students. Given the problems, every effort should be made to provide work time within the school setting when the students may find the Director of Forensics available to guide and encourage their efforts. Perhaps a class in Argumentation-Debate may have to provide the opportunity for practice and coaching of all competitive speech activities. Since the Director of Forensics will probably teach a full load,[26] practice sessions serving as demonstrations for speech classes may be possible. Or, speaking before classes of political science, economics, sociology and government may provide both the forensic students and their counterparts

in these classes with a rewarding and stimulating experience.[27]

Fortunately, or unfortunately, the creation and maintenance of a competitive team in forensics in the junior college means the exclusion of: (1) those students who lack the ability to benefit from such competition; (2) many students who have the ability but whose roles outside the college demand too much to allow for participation, and (3) most of the evening and adult students whose responsibilities and/or backgrounds would find travel prohibitive, the competition with younger students embarassing and time lacking for the rigorous levels of research and practice necessary to maintain a sharp competitive edge. These students may, however, find satisfaction and stimulation in the other two areas of the forensic program.

The second area of emphasis included in the junior college forensic program might be intramural events. Essentially a parallel of the intercollegiate program, the intramural program encompasses the same activities. The students served might be those who are preparing themselves to move up into the intercollegiate program, but especially those who have the desire to participate but lack the time or ability necessary to compete in a rigorous intercollegiate schedule. Here, the terminal-technical student might well gain new speaking experience beyond the classroom. Certainly the encouragement of participation in forensic activities parallels the recommendation suggesting special courses be created for the speech training of the terminal-technical student.[28]

These factors do not mean that the quality of the activities should be low. The intramural program simply provides another level of skill-learning "commensurate with the ability of the individual student." Such organized activities also provide a forum for the constructive energies of collegiate student bodies.

Contests may be run throughout the year, perhaps

on an assembly or after-class-hours basis so that student audiences might be in attendance. These contests might include all the activities at once or be run with each activity operating separately. Regardless, these events should be announced well in advance, publicized and timed so they are convenient for attendance by people of the college and the community.

The third area in the forensic program should be the speakers' bureau. This is perhaps the most correlative with the stated functions of the community college; providing community service and leadership. The activities to be included as part of this program are debate, oratory (persuasive speaking), oral interpretation, discussion and the symposium-forum.[29] Problems of local concern might well provide the topics for the speech activities of the speakers' bureau. For example, a debate could consider the proposition, Resolved: That Town X should institute a program of fluoridation, or, Resolved: That the members of the school board should be chosen by popular election. Oratory, discussion and symposium-forum should also seek local community problems to provide the substance of the activities.[30]

To provide the students with a learning experience and to provide the audiences with the maximum information and intellectual stimulation, the programs offered by the speakers' bureau should always offer several different views of the same problem. Of course, state and national problems should be discussed, but, as in good speaking methods, they must be made relevant to the immediate audience. Focus upon the problems of local concern will hopefully accomplish three goals:

1. teach the students, as members of the community, the sources available within the community for problem-solving, with the hope that this knowledge will carry over into their adult roles as citizens;

2. make the program more interesting to the listeners;

3. provide the listeners with information and insight into a problem which they may not have previously considered and thus stimulate their thinking in the problem area.

The students working in oral interpretation might also look to local problems as a basis for their reading. A program of entertainment might be developed in which good literature is presented to the audience primarily for their enjoyment and cultural enrichment. A second king of interpretive program should be persuasive in nature and should be developed like that program suggested by Martin Cobin.[31] Essentially, Cobin suggests selecting a contemporary problem, turning to literature for commentary relevant to the problem and tying the literature together with introductory and transitional remarks of the interpreter. The task of preparation assumed by the interpreter parallels the preparation of the debater, the orator, the extemporaneous speaker or the discussant. This latter king of "persuasion" would provide an unusual approach to problem-solving which would diversify a speaking program presented to an audience.

While the intercollegiate competition might not appeal to the adult members of the community college student body, the Director of Forensics should attempt to draw them into the speakers' bureau. Their business and social contacts within the community, their experiences and their citizen's concern for the problems of the community should make their contributions valuable to the younger students and to the peer audiences to whom they speak. Perhaps their age and maturity may add to the community perception of the entire forensic program.

Implicit within all the areas of forensics should be a high level of quality. As in any effective forensic program, the college, the individual and the forensic program could not afford to be poorly represented to a listening audience, whether it be a critic judge from another college or a neighbor at a P.T.A. meeting. The community college has a special need to

be well represented in order to overcome the stigma of "poor academic quality" so often associated with this educational movement. The students should display personal responsibility in personal matters, competency in the skills of speech and a thoroughness of preparation to merit consideration in any of the areas of the forensic program. Further, those speaking situations in which the students take part should be commensurate with their abilities. Students seem to learn little from experiences which require ability they do not possess, or in experiences which do not challenge them.

IV

Aside from the accepted benefits derived from any effective forensic program, the program described here seems to this writer to suit the educational place of the community college for several reasons:

1. It provides a wide range of activities and events for the student body of greatly diversified abilities, backgrounds and motivations.
2. It provides competitive motivation in the form of intercollegiate confrontation or intramural challenges. While not reaching all students, this kind of program may offer stimulation to students not otherwise reached by intramural or intercollegiate emphasis.
3. It provides a real speaker-audience relationship to be sought by those who have the capacity for seeking such a relationship.
4. It provides a service to the host community.
5. It provides for the intellectual stimulation of seeking to understand several types of problems.
6. It provides for the creative student to be both an entertainer and a persuader, yet using the medium of expression preferred.
7. It provides a natural means for stimulating interest in higher education among the high schools and the community at large.

8. It provides a demonstration device for the teacher of speech, economics, political science, sociology and the humanities.

9. It takes into account the dualism of the community college curriculum and, by adhering to recognized speech objectives, supplements that duality.

10. It encourages social responsibility and the need for participation in the social setting of the community after completion of the formal education.

11. It will hopefully generate respect for forensics, the school, the students and the director within the school, the community and region in which the college is located.[32]

Obviously, a program such as described attempts to achieve the ideal in community college forensics. Such a program has several obvious need areas which merely will be suggested here. First, an immense amount of time is needed by the Director of Forensics to administer such a program. Secondly, a sizeable budget is needed to finance travel, equipment, intramural tournaments, materials of administration, secretarial help and other essentials. Third, the need to stimulate interest in day and evening students to participate in the program is no easy task if no forensic activities have been provided before. A fourth need area may be the duplication of student participation so that all areas of emphasis are participated in by the same few students, instead of the development of a spread of student participation. A fifth area which always poses a dilemma is the choosing of qualified representatives of the program, the college and the community.

The balanced forensic program for the junior community college prescribed in this paper has attempted to solve several of the specific problems inherent in the community college movement of this country. With the increasing educational demand being made upon the high schools, the colleges and universities, the role of the community college will continue to expand within higher education. Perhaps the program

may enable speech and co-curricular forensic activities to form an integral, motivating part of the junior college community.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Raymond P. Kroggel, "Committee on Speech Education," Junior College Journal, XI, No. 9, (May, 1941), 577-579.

[2] Kroggel, p. 577.

[3] Kroggel, p. 579.

[4] Stanley Rives and Donald Klopf, "Differences in the Forensic Honorary Fraternities," Speaker and Gavel, II, No. 3, (March, 1965), 83-85.

[5] James W. Thornton, The Community Junior College, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1960), p. 35.

[6] Policy of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Regarding Community Colleges in Michigan, (Michigan Department of Public Instruction, 1964). Mimeographed.

[7] Thornton, p. 59-69.

[8] Barbara J. Hull, "Building the Junior College Program in Forensics," Junior College Journal. XXXI, No. 3, (November, 1960), 156.

[9] Thornton, p. 154.

[10] Thornton, p. 152.

[11] Burton R. Clark, Educating the Expert Society, (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1962), p. 241.

[12] Thornton, p. 148.

[13] Thornton, p. 153.

[14] Frederick Hauenstein and Dan P. Millar, "Student Preference for Being Remembered at Junior College: A Study," Michigan College Personnel Association Journal, I, No. 2, (Fall, 1964), 18.

[15] Fred Short, "Problems of Starting a Junior College Speech and Drama Department," Junior College Journal, XXX, No. 1, (September, 1959), 35.

[16] Arthur N. Kruger, Modern Debate, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1960), p. 5. Although referring specifically to debate, these values seem inherent within forensic activities as well.

[17] Bert Bradley, Jr., "Debate - Practical Training for Gifted Students," The Speech Teacher, III, No. 2, (March, 1959), 134-137.

[18] Kruger, p. 5-6.

[19] Raymond P. Kroggel, "Committee on Speech Education," Junior College Journal, XII, No. 7, (March, 1942), 410.

[20] These areas of emphasis coincide with the statement of the Speech Education Committee as found in the Junior College Journal, (March, 1941), 579.

[21] H. C. Klingbeil, "Michigan Junior College Debate League," Junior College Journal, X, No. 2, (October, 1939), 80.

[22] Ben Padrow, "Speech Education in the California Junior Colleges," The Speech Teacher, VIII, No. 1, (January, 1959), 58-62.

[23] For a case for the inclusion of oratory, see the Burt Dean article in the Junior College Journal, (February, 1940), 325-330.

[24] Short, p. 37.

[25] Short.

[26] Hull, p. 156.

[27] This also provides a means of promoting the program and recruiting interested students from within the college.

[28] P. Merville Larson, "Speech Courses for the Junior College Terminal Curriculum," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXIX, No. 3, (October, 1943), 361.

[29] Kenneth E. Andersen and Jerome B. Polisky, "The Application of the Symposium-Forum to Contest Discussion," The Speech Teacher, IX, No. 2, (March, 1960), 131-134. Although the authors advocate the symposium-forum for contest discussion, the method should provide a vehicle for learning by the student, intellectual stimulation for the audience and a lively program because of the several speakers, their ideas and the open discussion which would follow the presentation.

[30] N. Edd Miller, "Community Service Programs in Forensics," Central States Speech Journal, VII, No. 1, (Fall, 1955), 13.

[31] Martin Cobin, "Oral Interpretation and the Intercollegiate Forensics Program," Register, XI, No. 1, (Winter, 1963), 11-15.

[32] Douglas Ehninger, "Six Earmarks of a Sound Forensics Program," The Speech Teacher, I, (November, 1952), 237-242.